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the Socialist

Issue 1202

10-16 November 2022

formerly **Militant**



- **Support the strikes for inflation-proof pay rises**
 - **No cuts. Full funding for public services**
 - **Strike together. Kick the Tories out**
- **No trust in Starmer's Labour. Build a new mass workers' party**



COME TO SOCIALISM 2022

19-20 NOVEMBER, QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY, LONDON

FULL PROGRAMME ►►► p8-9

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Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Karl Marx

Workers' action can force out Tories and build a political alternative



Britain's economy is already in a recession, which the Bank of England predicts will last two years. Inflation is hitting a forty-year high. The hike in interest rates is the biggest for 30 years, leaving millions worrying about how they will pay their mortgages and their credit cards. More than a quarter of adults in the UK are now reliant on their credit cards to buy food.

Meanwhile, Sunak and Hunt are preparing an autumn statement which is said to include upwards of £33 billion of cuts to public spending. That is on top of the huge real-terms cuts to every public service already taking place as a result of inflation.

Chancellor Hunt's description of "eye-wateringly difficult" times ahead doesn't apply to multi-millionaires like him and prime minister Sunak, however. In fact, the pay of the chief executives of Britain's biggest 'FTSE 100' companies soared by 23% this year, to an average of £3.9 million! Meanwhile, the same chief executives are demanding their workforces accept real-terms pay cuts.

British capitalism is in crisis, but it is not the capitalist elite who are suffering as a result, it is the working-class majority. If we don't fight back, the bosses and the Tory government will be prepared to drive our pay and living standards even further into the dirt.

But as hundreds of thousands of workers have already discovered in 2022, collective action can win. Labour Research reports that more than fifty groups of workers have been able to win inflation-beating pay rises, by taking, or sometimes just by threatening, strike action. Overall, they show a clear correlation between being prepared to strike and winning better pay awards.

As we go to press, the Royal College of Nursing has voted for strike action in Britain for the time in its history (see page 7). Other health unions, civil servants, teachers and other workers are also in the process of balloting. The trade union movement can defeat Sunak's 'austerity on



PHOTO: TOMMY LIVERPOOL

steroids' and force his government out of office.

The potential exists for the TUC to organise the biggest wave of co-ordinated strike action this century. If the TUC fails to give a lead, all those trade unions who want to fight should work together to coordinate the action.

However, while 2022 has been the year in which the necessity of workers' collective action has been demonstrated to a new generation, the working class does not yet have any collective voice in the political arena. Millions are desperate to get rid of the Tories, but are also angry that the only 'alternative' on offer is Sir Keir Starmer's 'New Labour' party which

has made abundantly clear that, like Sunak and Hunt, it would do the bidding of the 'markets' in government. Ultimately, that means doing the bidding of the capitalist elite, who are motivated not by the good of society as a whole but by maximising their own profits.

A mass movement forcing the Tories out would be a victory, but would clearly not end the need for a struggle to defend workers' interests. There is an urgent need to start building a political alternative that will fight for those interests. A start needs to be made at the next general election - with trade union and socialist candidates standing against pro-capitalist Labour candidates - so that the battle that has begun in the workplaces will also have a voice in parliament.

SOCIALISM TODAY Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party November issue includes... Starmer as PM: How should the workers' movement prepare? Stop the war: Ukraine and the anti-war movement Climate crisis: Socialist change not climate change socialisttoday.org/subscribe // 020 8988 8777 Paper subscription £3 a month, e-subscription £2.50

A SPECIAL CRISIS OF BRITISH CAPITALISM AND TORY PARTY DISINTEGRATION Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 2022 London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

PAULA MITCHELL SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Well over one and a half million workers are currently engaged in strike action or are balloting; a movement is building that could drive the crisis-ridden Tories out and fight to end the cost-of-living crisis.

In the midst of this strike wave, on 2 November, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the leading body of all the trade unions, organised a lobby of parliament and a rally, under the banner "General Election Now".

The Socialist Party, along with the National Shop Stewards Network, had campaigned for this to be a mass midweek 'Tories Out' demonstration.

The trade unions have gained enormous authority, as an organised expression of anger at the government and the heavy price it is inflicting on working-class and middle-class people, and with the potential power to change the situation. 2 November could have been an important step in building that fight.

Unfortunately, this opportunity was missed, with low-key lobbying of MPs by groups of trade unionists and an evening rally. To its credit, the rail union RMT additionally organised a lunchtime protest against the threat of new anti-trade union laws.

In the rally, trade union leaders laid out the appalling situation facing working-class people. They pledged a fight, but unfortunately mostly only in general terms. Paul Nowak, incoming TUC general secretary, for example, rightly said we should "not just demand better, but fight for better". Outgoing general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "We will fight for our class". But they made no clear intention to coordinate strike action to win "better".

While Mark Serwotka, of civil service union PCS, said that they would talk to other unions to coordinate strike dates, none of the leaders concretely responded to the call from a teacher who said: "People want a general strike!"

Calls were made for a general election and for a government that will invest in public services, build homes for all, bring in a £15-an-hour minimum wage and tax the rich. Speaking on behalf of Unite general secretary Sharon Graham, Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab called for the democratic nationalisation of public services, with no compensation to the wealthy shareholders.

Only a handful of the speakers even hinted that Sir Keir Starmer's New Labour party doesn't agree with that programme. Jo Grady of the University and College Union warned Labour against "tough decisions". Mick Lynch of the RMT and Matt Wrack of the Fire Brigades Union both demanded of Labour politicians that they stand with workers, responding to the sacking of shadow minister Sam Tarry after he did precisely that.

Onay Kasab spelt out the role of the Labour council in Coventry against its own bin workers, spending £4 million of council tax-payers' money on a strike-breaking operation, and victimising union rep Pete Randle. He said the politicians have been asked which side are you on and the answer has come back: It's not ours. "Our fight is in our hands".

Mick Lynch went on to say: "There are no neutrals in these struggles. Every politician that we put in there as the organised working class has got to identify with the needs of the working people... So we can have a general election, but when we get a party that is supposed to represent the organised working class and the poor people of this country... they've got to commit to a programme in favour of working people, without any reservations whatsoever."

Workers are fighting back, but TUC lobby a missed opportunity



Socialist Party members with the RMT at the lobby and, below, Unison members PHOTOS: JAMES IVENS AND PAUL MATTSOON



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The Socialist Party argues that one of the best ways to apply that pressure is for trade unionists and socialists to stand as candidates, so that a Starmer government is forced to 'look over its left shoulder'. Trade union leaders like Mick who draw these conclusions about Starmer's Labour should take the necessary steps to form a new party that does precisely commit to a programme in favour of working people.

Taking up Frances O'Grady's response to anti-trade union laws - "see you in court" - Onay Kasab declared: "Never mind see you in court - see you on the picket line!" Mick

Lynch similarly took up that point, saying that we cannot rely on the ruling class to do us a favour. "Our emancipation is in our hands... Every worker out, everyone in solidarity, and let's change this society for the better." Unfortunately, the mild lobby of parliament did not match up to the fight that is necessary.

Throughout the day, Socialist Party members discussed with workers attending and gave out leaflets that put a clear way forward: Tories out; coordinate strike action; for a new workers' party.

Socialist Students members also gathered, to support and link up with trade unionists.

ARE WE HEADING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE? Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 2022 London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

RMT members spoke to the Socialist

'A proper strike, every union the same day'

"This protest is against the anti-trade union laws. The Tories want to introduce minimum service levels. It should be the minimum right of an individual to withdraw your labour. It's a last resort, but if we're not allowed to use our industrial strength, where does that leave us."

"I don't want to lose a day's wage - I want an effective strike that means we get around the table. Minimum service levels would make it longer. It would give the bosses the strength to try to impose things on us, and would just lengthen a strike."

"Some of the MPs need to look at themselves. What minimum service do they give us? Matt Hancock is off to the jungle, but will vote that we can't go on strike!"

"All unions should wake up and realise we have to stand together and fight - we'll be stronger and we'll achieve more. I don't care if you call it a 'national' strike or 'coordinated'. Let's have a proper strike, every union the same day."

BILL KIMM MERSEYSIDE RMT BRANCH SECRETARY

'Candidates against those who are against us'

"We're always making the call for a general strike, and that's what's needed. Various laws are in place to make that difficult, but if there are disputes it needs to be spread. We need common ground. For example, for us (in London Underground) they want to put our pension into the local government fund. We should be lining up with people in it and others being forced into it, to all fight together for better. If our current pension scheme is the best, we need to get other workers into it. Find common ground. And till then, coordinate. Get as many of the current disputes as possible to strike on the same day."

"In Keir Starmer we have a knight of the realm at the head of the Labour Party. We have a party, which is likely to be the next government, which is the status quo. Tory with a red rosette."

"We need to lay it out. What are our demands of Labour? What are his policies, how do they fit with our aspirations? What are his real intentions regarding the anti-trade union laws? So the call for a general election needs to be considered carefully. There should be candidates against those who work against the interests of trade unionists and working people. People like Sam Tarry and Jeremy Corbyn should stand."

GLENNY WATSON FINSBURY PARK RMT BRANCH, CHAIR 2023 RMT NATIONAL BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITY CONFERENCE



Resist Tory council funding horror hole

MARK EVANS
BRANCH SECRETARY CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY UNISON

A recent press release from public sector union Unison highlighted that councils across Wales face a collective funding gap of over £200 million in the next financial year. But this figure is likely to be a gross underestimate after Jeremy Hunt gives his fiscal statement on 17 November.

According to the Daily Telegraph, he is going to fill what the BBC estimates is a £50 billion budget shortfall with a combination of tax increases and cuts to public spending. These cuts, coming as they do after over a decade of Tory austerity, will devastate council services, jobs and lives.

This is horror without end for council workers, who worked through the pandemic at significant risk to keep vital but already depleted services running. They have then been hit, like other working-class people, with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Now its Tory austerity mark two.

Council funding has been in crisis since the Con-Dem government's austerity starting in 2010. By October 2021, the Guardian was reporting that 25 local authorities were on the verge of receiving S114 notices (technically bankrupt) with three councils - Slough, Northampton and Croydon - going through this process.

Rising inflation and increased demand makes the situation now even more bleak. While it has so far been English councils going over the brink, the situation for councils in Wales is little better, despite us having a Labour Welsh Government for over twenty years.

The harsh reality is that the Welsh Labour Government and councils,

£3.19bn

The local government budget hole across England, Scotland and Wales is £3.19 billion



Mark joins Unison lobby of Carmarthenshire council in 2020 SWANSEA AND SW WALES SP

many of them Labour or Plaid Cymru (as in the case of Carmarthenshire), have put up very little resistance to these attacks on working-class people and the public services we use. As a result, the Tories will see councils as fair game for major cuts.

But we can end the horror - we can defeat these attacks. We call on the Welsh Labour Government to refuse to do the Tories' dirty work. It should set a 'no cuts' budget, including properly financing local government and the NHS, and then call on councils to do likewise. It should call on councils and the trade unions for support in mobilising a mass campaign to stop the cuts. This would get tremendous support from working-class communities across Wales.

The Tories, faced with such mass opposition to austerity and the current strike wave of trade unions,

could be forced to back down, as they have been many times, and be forced into calling a general election.

What we need, in the Welsh Government and in local councils, is leaders who are prepared to fight the cuts, not just bemoan them and then effectively do nothing to oppose them.

• This is an edited version of a press release from Carmarthenshire County Unison

CAN YOU FIGHT THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN ELECTIONS?

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2022** London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

Children's social care 'staring down the barrel'

GLYNN DOHERTY
SOCIAL CARE TRADE UNION ORGANISER

Children's social care services are "staring down the barrel of a very difficult winter", according to Steve Crocker, president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS).

Crocker, who earlier this year used his inaugural presidential speech to demand something be done to stop profiteering in the sector, says councils will need an extra three quarters of a billion pounds just to stand still. With the new prime minister and chancellor planning further swingeing cuts to council budgets, services face a deepening crisis.

A recent ADCS report says there are 32,000 young people aged 19-21 who had previously been in care supported by local authorities, a 22% increase in just seven years. An estimated 2.77 million initial contacts were received by children's services in 2021-22 - a 10% increase from two years prior.

Again, Crocker returned to the theme of profiteering, saying the "elephant in the room" was providers earning significant profits from a statutory service.

How can this be challenged?

Pressure must be maintained on central government by the trade unions and campaign groups, especially given the weak and divided state of the Tory party. But local authorities, with their significant reserves and ability to borrow money, could really pile on the pressure by setting people's budgets based on what is needed to protect and increase essential services - and demanding the money from the government.

Councillors must fight

We need councillors prepared to fight for what is desperately needed in our communities. Councillors who refuse to implement further austerity, rejecting tax increases, rent or other charges for working-class people, and opposing the privatisation of council jobs and services, including in children's social care.

That campaign is not going to come from the Labour Party, with Angela Rayner again signalling how comfortable it is with "the filthy rich", no doubt including the social care profiteers. It will come from the grassroots campaigns and the trade unions. And it must mean those organisations standing their own candidates in next year's local elections.

Bulb buyout - open the books!

CALLUM JOYCE
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Gas and electricity supplier Octopus Energy recently announced a deal to buy competitor Bulb Energy from the government for between £100 and £200 million. This comes after Ofgem, the government department responsible for regulating the UK's energy industry, took control of Bulb when it ran into financial difficulties last year.

The size of the state bailout has so far reached an estimated £2 billion. But it is not known what the value of Bulb, which currently supplies energy to around 1.5 million people, is. The government and Octopus have declined to publish the details.

But we have the right to know

where taxpayers' money, much of it taken from the working class, has been going. Ofgem must open Bulb's books to the public and allow the trade unions and those affected by the sale to examine its finances.

Despite Octopus's slick design and branding, intended to suggest that it is the most environmentally conscious of the energy companies, the company fundamentally exists to generate profits for its shareholders. It would not have gone ahead with the purchase if it did not see significant financial gain in doing so.

Did Octopus really pay full value, or have the government effectively handed the company back to the private sector after a huge amount of public spending, as they did with the banks after 2007-08?

The government bailouts demonstrate the failures of the capitalist market. Squeezed for every drop of profit, charging sky-high prices and paying staff low wages, privately owned energy companies have been unable to withstand economic shocks.

Temporary nationalisation, before selling companies back to the private sector, offers no long-term solution. Companies remain vulnerable to future shocks, and continue to extract profits by hiking prices and squeezing wages.

To start to deal with the cost-of-living crisis we need full nationalisation of the energy companies under democratic control by the trade unions, the employees of these companies, and consumers. Democratic socialist

planning of the energy industry would ensure it is efficiently run to meet people's needs, not to line the pockets of the rich while ordinary people freeze in their own homes.

Unfortunately there is no establishment party that is prepared to fight for these ideas. Talk of nationalisation is anathema to free-market Tory politicians, and Labour leader Keir Starmer has categorically ruled out the idea of nationalising energy under a Labour government.

That is why the Socialist Party campaigns for trade unions and socialists across the country to take steps towards forming a new mass workers' party, one which fights for these ideas and for the socialist transformation of society to put an end to this profiteering capitalist system.

Why I'm coming to SOCIALISM 2022

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November, Queen Mary University, London



I am campaigning for a 'yes' vote in the Unison NHS pay ballot. I've lost count of how many people I've spoken to who are struggling to make ends meet in the NHS, with some working all the overtime they can, taking second jobs, and even using food banks to put food on their tables and a roof over their heads. This has to change!

Only socialism is capable of providing the change everyone needs while offering a sustainable way to save the planet. I am attending Socialism 2022 to gain further understanding of why and how the capitalist system can be overthrown and replaced with socialism.

As a returner to this amazing event, I cannot over emphasise the sense of comradeship and political understanding I gain from being among so many socialists.

Tom Hunt, NHS worker



I am really looking forward to Socialism 2022. We are currently fighting for the future of the rail industry, and for all of our jobs.

As an active trade unionist and socialist, the Socialism event is the only one I've ever been to where you can hear about the ideas of socialism presented in a practical and accessible way.

Ted Woodley, RMT member



Socialism is the event every year that recharges my batteries. Getting together with other socialists, lively discussion and debate on a whole range of issues - there's something for everyone. But this year is so important: the degradation of politics, the lack of a mass working-class political alternative, but workers moving into concerted action, reclaiming what is rightfully ours.

Our ideas are the key to success. If you are a socialist and want an alternative system, come and discuss, debate and join us at Socialism 2022.

Marion Lloyd, PCS BEIS President (personal capacity)



I'm attending Socialism to discuss with others the key issues affecting workers today, especially with the rising cost of living. But I will also be bringing my newborn - an early and essential education for a young socialist!

Mary Summers, Trade union organiser



Food and fuel banks, even the last resorts are running out of funds due to the cost-of-living crisis. Capitalism offers no way out, we need a system change. That's why I am going to Socialism 2022.

Isabel Grant, Unite



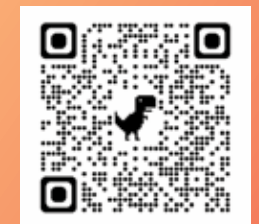
I'm attending Socialism 2022 because, as a striking railway worker, this annual event always proves to be an invaluable experience. It brings together some of the most militant and fighting elements of the workers' movement, to debate and discuss the necessary political ideas needed to bring separate industrial disputes into coordinated national action, with working-class voices right at its centre.

Kris O'Sullivan, ASLEF Birmingham 141



This Socialism event brings together working-class people to discuss and learn about socialist ideas. The discussion will cover how we are rising against austerity policies and to change the system all over the world.

Lawanya Chandra, Unite member in service industry



Tickets and info socialism.org.uk



COP27: Capitalism accelerates us down the highway to climate hell

"We are on a highway to climate hell, with our foot still on the accelerator". These are the words of UN chief, António Guterres. The reality for many, like the over 2 million people left homeless after floods in Pakistan this year, is that the destination has already been reached.

World leaders are assembling in Egypt to spout soundbites and cynically try to show off their green credentials. Rishi Sunak, having initially snubbed the conference, arrived at

the event in Egypt saying: "We can bequeath our children a greener planet and a more prosperous future."

This from the head of a government that is about to announce further austerity, will oversee the reopening of coal-fired power stations, and will grant further licenses for North Sea gas and oil extraction.

A year on from the COP26 summit in Glasgow, progress towards limiting the global temperature rise to

1.5C is "woefully inadequate". Saving the planet from climate disaster requires huge investment and an enormous transformation in how energy is produced and distributed. The hugely profitable and influential fossil fuel giants are unwilling to forego their profits; the banks are in on it too. The world's capitalist governments are unwilling to challenge them. As economic crisis deepens, rival capitalists fight for a competitive advantage in pursuit of profit.

Ultimately, the wealth and resources needed to stop and reverse global heating is there, but in the wrong hands. By nationalising the energy companies and banks, along with other major industries, that wealth could be put to good use. On the basis of genuine international collaboration, only possible with socialism, a democratic socialist plan could use the knowledge and experience of the working class to transform the world - ending climate

disaster and improving workers' living standards internationally.

CAN A SUSTAINABLE SOCIALIST PLANNED ECONOMY COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2022** London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

COME TO SOCIALISM 2022

Saturday 19 & Sunday 20 November,
The Graduate Building,
Queen Mary University,
Mile End Rd, Bethnal Green, London E1 4NS
REGISTRATION OPEN FROM 9.30AM

WORKING-CLASS FIGHTERS at the

RALLY FOR SOCIALISM

**RALLY 5.30-7.30PM,
SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER,
PEOPLE'S PALACE, QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF
LONDON, MILE END RD, LONDON E1 4NS**

Speakers at the rally include:

- HANNAH SELL**, Socialist Party general secretary
- PRASAD WELIKUMBURA**, a leader of the mass revolt in Sri Lanka
- GARY CLARK**, CWU Scotland No. 2 Branch Secretary (personal capacity)
- SHEILA CAFFREY**, NEU Executive Committee (personal capacity)
- LEADING TRADE UNION ACTIVISTS FROM RMT AND UNITE**

Social: we will be gathering for a post-rally drink on Saturday evening at the Drapers Bar & Kitchen 17 Godward Square, Bethnal Green, London E1 4FZ

RALLY LIVE BROADCAST AND ZOOM ACCESS

Each of the 5 Saturday morning sessions and two sessions from each time slot will have zoom access for ticket holders who require it.

The Rally will also be live broadcast via Youtube for those unable to attend in person. Zoom links and YouTube premiere link will be sent to ticket holders in the week before the event.

**tickets & info:
socialism.org.uk**



MAJOR SOCIALIST BOOKSHOP ON SITE

Programme of workshops can be subject to changes

FREE CRÈCHE AVAILABLE throughout. Book by 12 November via 020 8988 8777 or socialism@socialistparty.org.uk

THEME	SATURDAY 11.30AM-1.30PM	SATURDAY 2.30-4.30PM	SUNDAY 11AM-1PM	SUNDAY 2-4PM
2022 STRIKE WAVE	WHAT WAS BLAIRISM? SPEAKER: JAMES IVENS - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE	ARE WE HEADING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE? SPEAKER: ROB WILLIAMS - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER	THE 1926 GENERAL STRIKE - LESSONS FOR TODAY SPEAKER: IAN PATTISON - THE SOCIALIST EDITORIAL TEAM	MARXISTS AND THE TRADE UNIONS SPEAKER: ALEC THRIVES - SOCIALIST PARTY WALES ORGANISER
POLITICAL VOICE FOR WORKERS	WHAT WAS BLAIRISM? SPEAKER: JAMES IVENS - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE	LESSONS FROM THE CORBYN EXPERIENCE SPEAKER: ISAI MARIJERLA - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL TREASURER	IS 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH' ENOUGH? SPEAKER: CLIVE HEEMSKERK - EDITOR OF SOCIALISM TODAY	CAN YOU FIGHT THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN ELECTIONS? SPEAKERS: DAVE NELLIST - FORMER 'MILITANT' LABOUR MP & FORMER SP COUNCILLOR & NICK CHAFFEY - SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN & SOUTH EAST REGIONAL SECRETARY
HOW DO WE CHANGE THE WORLD?	WHAT WAS BLAIRISM? SPEAKER: JAMES IVENS - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE	REVOLUTIONARY DEMANDS IN THE 21ST CENTURY SPEAKER: JOSH ASKER - THE SOCIALIST EDITORIAL TEAM	CAN A SUSTAINABLE SOCIALIST PLANNED ECONOMY COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE? SPEAKER: MARK BEST - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE	IRAN - CAN THE PROTESTS DELIVER AN IRANIAN REVOLUTION? SPEAKER: BOB LABI - COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
TROTSKYISM	WHAT WAS BLAIRISM? SPEAKER: JAMES IVENS - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE	THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION - WHAT REALLY HAPPENED? SPEAKER: THEO SHARJEFF - SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH & STUDENT ORGANISER	WHAT'S THE ROLE OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY? SPEAKER: DAVE REID - SOCIALIST PARTY WALES ORGANISER	WHAT WAS THE USSR? THE 'STATE CAPITALIST THEORY' REVISITED SPEAKER: SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE - SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
BRITAIN AND IRELAND	CAPITALISM AND THE CROWN SPEAKER: SCOTT JONES - THE SOCIALIST EDITORIAL TEAM	A SPECIAL CRISIS OF BRITISH CAPITALISM & TORY PARTY DISINTEGRATION SPEAKER: HANNAH SELL - SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY	IRELAND 1921 - A MARXIST VIEWPOINT ON THE MAKING OF A DIVIDED ISLAND SPEAKERS: SEANUS SMYTH - SP EAST MIDLANDS ORGANISER, NIALL MULLHOLLAND - COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT	SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL QUESTION SPEAKER: PHILIP STOTT - NATIONAL SECRETARY OF SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND
WORKING CLASS FIGHTING BACK	CAPITALISM AND THE CROWN SPEAKER: SCOTT JONES - THE SOCIALIST EDITORIAL TEAM	RACISM AND THE POLICE SPEAKER: DEJI OLAYINKA - SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK & ASIAN GROUP & CWU ACTIVIST	WHY ARE THE TORIES OBSESSED WITH ATTACKING TRANS RIGHTS? SPEAKER: MICHAEL JOHNSON - SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ MEMBERS' GROUP	GIG ECONOMY - HOW WORKERS ARE FIGHTING BACK SPEAKER: RYAN ALDRED - SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ORGANISER
IDEAS TO RESIST	FASCISM AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM SPEAKER: BERKAY KARTAV - SOCIALIST PARTY LONDON ORGANISER	ENERGY BILL CRISIS AND THE POLL TAX EXPERIENCE SPEAKER: STEVE SCORE - SOCIALIST PARTY EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL SECRETARY	STUDENTS, ANTI-SEMITISM AND SOCIALISM - WHAT'S GOING ON ON CAMPUS? SPEAKERS: IAIN DALTON - SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE REGIONAL SECRETARY & ADAM POWELL-DAVIES - SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH & STUDENT ORGANISER	NATIONALISATION AND WORKERS' POWER SPEAKER: ALISTAIR TICE - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE
INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM	THE NUCLEAR THREAT TODAY? SPEAKER: CLIVE HEEMSKERK - EDITOR OF SOCIALISM TODAY	MARXIST ECONOMICS - WHAT IS INFLATION & WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? SPEAKER: HELEN PATTISON - SOCIALIST PARTY LONDON REGIONAL SECRETARY	INTRODUCTION TO DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM SPEAKER: TOM BALDWIN - SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTH WEST REGIONAL SECRETARY	INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL MATERIALISM SPEAKER: NICK HART - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE
STRUGGLE ACROSS THE WORLD	LATIN AMERICA'S 'PINK REVOLUTION' - WHERE IS IT AT? SPEAKER: TONY SAUNOIS - COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY	SRI LANKA CRISIS - WHAT IS THE REAL ALTERNATIVE? SPEAKERS: PRASAD WELIKUMBURA - KEY LEADER OF STRUGGLE IN SRI LANKA & TU SENAN - TAMIL SOLIDARITY	WORLD RELATIONS AND THE DECLINE OF THE US SUPERPOWER SPEAKER: LENNY SHAIL - SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	UKRAINE-RUSSIA WAR - FIGHTING FOR WORKERS' UNITY TO END HORROR OF WAR SPEAKER: JUDY BEISHON - COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
WOMEN'S LIBERATION & SOCIALISM	LATIN AMERICA'S 'PINK REVOLUTION' - WHERE IS IT AT? SPEAKER: TONY SAUNOIS - COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY	ROE VS WADE - THE FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY SPEAKERS: CHRISTINE THOMAS - SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & PEGGY WANG - US SOCIALIST & UNION POWER & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE ORGANISER	WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS - A PROUD HISTORY OF STRUGGLE SPEAKERS: HEATHER RAWLING - SP EAST MIDLANDS ORGANISER, JANE NELLIST - COVENTRY SP & COVENTRY TUC PRESIDENT (PERSONAL CAPACITY)	HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - ITS ORIGINS & HOW TO FIGHT IT SPEAKERS: CORINTHIA WARD - BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY & BEA GARDNER - SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Councillor standing for TUSC in Louth

CLLR LYNNE COONEY
TRINITY WARD, LOUTH

I joined Labour under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership I identified with his principles of empathy, compassion, and desire to help those who needed it the most, to support workers, the disabled, the disadvantaged. His policies resonated with me, but then came Keir Starmer. His promise to unite us became an obvious ploy to become leader, then came the expulsions, the flimsy allegations, and the purge of left-wing members.

The final straw came when Sir Keir Starmer accepted a Tory MP into the Labour ranks. How can someone go from a party so right-wing to a supposed left-wing party? Then the penny dropped.

I couldn't stay any longer, and while I respected other local Labour members' desire to stay in the hope

that the left wing would experience a resurgence, in my heart I knew that hope was futile.

I was politically homeless, until I found the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Suddenly all my political principles were there and it was a no-brainer to join the cause. I had a voice again, I could fight for the working class, the disability groups which I am passionate about and advocate for.

With the cost-of-living crisis and the mounting hatred of the Tories, it seems the right time to put TUSC on the map in Louth. We organised a public meeting on 3 November. I did a few media interviews, and we delivered 1,000 leaflets in my ward and the wider town. We engaged with many interested people and some ex-Labour Party members who braved the shocking weather on the night and now want to help TUSC.

It's given me hope from conversations that people are looking for an alternative; they understand we can't sit on our hands any longer. It's time to stand by our principles, be proud of what we believe in, and fight. TUSC is part of that and I am proud to be part of TUSC.

In the May elections next year, I will stand for TUSC in the local town elections in my ward, that I am proud to represent.

● Visit tusc.org.uk for more and to get involved

LESSONS FROM THE CORBYN EXPERIENCE
Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2022**
London, 19-20 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

Fighting for socialism on campus

Liverpool

Last year, with an average of eight to ten people attending Socialist Students meetings, we showed solidarity on picket lines, and did campaign stalls. Speakers at our meetings included University and College Union (UCU), Unite the Union and the local trades union council.

This year, we have seen impressive growth. Our numbers have more than doubled, and enthusiasm is higher than ever.

We have very interesting and complex conversations, and many Socialist Students members have attended local picket lines to show solidarity with the dockers and transport union RMT. Regular campaign stalls have raised the necessity of providing accessible late-night public transport via the Night Bus Campaign.

DEAN YOUNG

University of Arts London

Socialist Students has been campaigning most weeks and spreading socialist ideas at many protests. There has been far more engagement than last year; students are more angry towards the Tory government and the capitalist system.

There is an immensely strong desire for an alternative to the current system, and more students see socialism as this alternative. More students have been reaching out to us, looking to learn more about socialism, and getting involved in action on and off campus.

Capitalism is in crisis, students feel underrepresented and oppressed, and there is a blatant need for a socialist alternative.

ZEPH SMITH



NEW SOCIALIST PARTY PUBLICATION
INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM
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www.socialism.org.uk

Fight Gateshead council's plan to close our leisure centres!



JOEL BYERS
SOUTH TYNE AND WEARSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

As soaring food and energy prices hit the working class hard, and twelve years of Conservative austerity have compounded problems in already deprived areas in the north east, Gateshead's Labour council has announced plans to close leisure centres in the Gateshead area, holding consultations over the next month.

The Tories have cut funding to Gateshead council by £179 million in the twelve years since they came to power, and plan to cut another £55 million over the next five years. The major shopping centre in the area (the Metro centre) ironically has a leaflet in its 'community hub space' saying: "The community hub is aligned with Gateshead council's

2030 vision strategy, encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles for people in Gateshead and beyond."

Unlike prime minister Rishi Sunak, the people of Gateshead cannot afford their own personal pool, and rely on the public leisure centres for clubs and exercise. And in a time of high rates of obesity and mental health issues, the thought of losing these vital services has turned frustration to anger at the Tory government, and the lack of opposition from Keir Starmer's Labour.

What we really need is a party for the working class, a party that will stand against any cuts to our public services, a party that will stand with working people fighting for their conditions and decent pay. That's why I will be standing as a candidate for TUSC in my area.

Fighting bus cuts

Reading

The Tiger 7 bus was a route from Reading to a town called Fleet, an hourly service, including on Sundays. But Reading Buses, owned and funded by Labour-run Reading council and Wokingham Borough Council, completely cut the service in January.

After we campaigned, the old route was partially brought back. But it's simply insufficient for people's needs.

When this happened, the council said: "Use it or lose it." They set it up to fail.

Reading Buses also raised the fares. It now costs me £19 a week to get the bus to college.

This is why we started a campaign against this. The service must be fully restored, and bus fares should be lowered.

ADAM GILMAN

Peterborough

Bus services in my neck of the woods face cuts. It is claimed that services are frequently almost empty.

But the main cut is to a service that

goes to and from a business park on the city outskirts. The early morning buses tend to be full going out there and not-so-full going back, and vice versa at tea time.

The route obviously provides a function. It's difficult to see why it needs to be cut. It seems the answer is that the private operator demands that services have to be full both ways before they can operate them!

Another service threatened with the chop was introduced in the last year. It links new housing directly with the main hospital.

But this hourly service isn't early enough to transport staff to and from the main morning shift change, and it doesn't run much after 3pm either. So obviously services have been underused.

Protests by passengers and trade unions have now forced the local authority to retender all but one of the 18 routes. Funding for the services is only guaranteed until March. So the Socialist Party says that, instead, public transport should be returned to public ownership and control, but with much more democratic management than under previous nationalised industries.

STEVE CAWLEY

Support workers' struggle in Sri Lanka



The following is a model resolution to be passed at trade union meetings in support of workers fighting back in Sri Lanka as part of the mass movement against the cost-of-living crisis and repressive government.

climate of fear created by the government has restricted the political activities of Tamils, Muslims and hill country workers

THIS BRANCH RESOLVES:

- To affirm its solidarity with the struggle of workers, students and youth in Sri Lanka
- Support the movement for a people's council in Sri Lanka
- To demand that the Sri Lankan government:
- Allow all democratic rights including freedom of assembly, free speech, and freedom for dissent
- Stop attacking the protests and arresting protesters
- To release all activists immediately, including Wasantha Mudalige, convener of the student union, and others who are held. And drop all charges against the activists
- Abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)
- To support the Ceylon Teachers Union (CTU), Independent Ceylon Teachers Union (ICTU) to produce a bulletin for its members
- To publicise the activity of Tamil Solidarity and other events organised by the Tamil community in defence of their rights
- To support the development of independent trade unions in Sri Lanka and to help monitor conditions in the workplaces
- To forward this motion to regional/national bodies of our union as appropriate, and encourage them to support/affiliate as appropriate

The affiliation fee is £250 - or to make a one-off donation. Cheques payable to: Tamil Solidarity (see tamilsolidarity.org for details) - contribution towards assisting the work of teachers union and other unions in Sri Lanka.

THE REPRESSIVE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT IS TRAMPLING DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS:

- Freedom of speech - opposition politicians, trade unionists, civil rights campaigners, and journalists continue to face repression, and severe restrictions remain in place on the media
- Freedom of assembly - more and more places are put under police and military control prohibiting any gathering. All the protests are currently attacked and protesters arrested in each time
- Workers' rights - The Sri Lankan government is brutally anti-union. The workers' leaders are arrested and charged for simply protesting to defend workers conditions. Labour rights are under attack. The government is further taking actions to limit or stop trade union activities
- Public transport - public services are being privatised, and workers' conditions are being attacked across the board. This will also facilitate the rapid commercialisation of the island's resources. The

WHAT WAY FORWARD FOR REVOLUTION IN SRI LANKA?
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Socialism 2022 Help us ensure we have the funds to fight for socialism here and around the world

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL TREASURER

Socialism 2022 is taking place amid the biggest cost-of-living crisis faced by ordinary working-class and young people. A part of the event will be a financial appeal to raise funds to help build the Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party has consistently fought for the socialist transformation of society. Our members and supporters have been out on the street campaigning, and as part of the workers movement, raising socialist ideas that are needed to change the world.

This year, for example, in the face of numerous capitalist crises, we have consistently championed the building of working-class political representation. Others will bash the Tories and moan about Starmer - but we say what needs to be done!

Our trade union members have been battling within the unions for action for pay rises and better terms and conditions. And our party collectively offers ideas for the next steps forward for those strikes to win - starting with coordinating the action. Students and young members have been doing campaign stalls on the cost-of-living crisis, and the need for a mass movement to end it.

Our weekly newspaper is an antidote to the idea that nothing can be done, and helps all those who read it to see that a socialist alternative is possible - and necessary. We defend the Marxist methods of perspective and programme. Our workplace

pages are full of action taken by workers - showing a glimpse of the huge potential power of the working class.

Our campaigns pages are full of fightbacks not seen in other newspapers. We are a party of the working class and our paper reflects that.

The international articles show the worldwide storm that's developing. We take our international work seriously - we support the Committee for a Workers' International, including financially. There isn't a single country that has a strong capitalist government, free from crisis. Uprisings in Iran and Sri Lanka are the foretaste of the future. A third of the Socialism 2022 finance appeal will go towards helping build our

international work.

The Socialist Party is confident that we have the ideas and a programme to fight for socialist ideas. Help us to also be financially prepared.

The cost-of-living crisis has hit everyone and we are not immune to it. As inflation reaches a record high, the cost of everything is going up - the cost of paper, tins, materials and electricity have doubled. But politically we cannot make cutbacks to our material, or the scale of our intervention in events - we must instead fight to increase the socialist voice in events. If you agree with us, please help us to ensure we have the financial means to point to how the working class can win the class struggles and end capitalism.

Fund the fightback
DONATE TODAY
● Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777
● or make cheques payable to Socialist Party,
PO Box 1398, London EN1 9GT

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022	DEADLINE: 3 JANUARY 2022
South West	946	1,800	53%	
East Midlands	656	1,850	35%	
North West	385	1,150	33%	
Yorkshire	734	2,550	29%	
Wales	462	2,300	20%	
Northern	150	750	20%	
Eastern	165	1,200	14%	
Southern and SW	310	2,350	13%	
West Midlands	289	2,600	11%	
London	464	4,600	10%	
Other	646	3,850	17%	
TOTAL	5,207	25,000	21%	



Socialist Party members joined the People's Assembly demonstration in London on 5 November putting forward our programme to kick out the Tories - for coordinated strike action, and fighting for a new mass workers' party PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON

Global debt crisis



More uprisings on the horizon?

Anti-government protest in Sri Lanka on 13 April 2022 in front of the Presidential Secretariat ANTAN O/CC

JOSH ASKER
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The heroic scenes of the Sri Lankan masses storming Colombo's presidential palace, bringing an end to hated president Gotabaya Rajapaksa's rule, will have inspired millions of workers globally who, like the Sri Lankan masses, face spiralling prices and shortages of goods.

The economic crisis fuelling the class anger of the Sri Lankan uprising was deepened further by the government's default on its foreign debts as foreign currency reserves emptied. The default has triggered warnings throughout the capitalist press that "Sri Lanka will not be the last country to have to choose between subsidising essentials and paying creditors".

Catalyst for uprising

The working class and poor of the so-called 'emerging markets', the majority of the world's population, face a huge crisis. The world faces deep instability, and popular uprisings like that of Sri Lanka. Debt is a major catalyst.

The Economist magazine identifies 53 nations with unsustainable or vulnerable debts - the "fragile 53". These nations include Ghana, Tunisia, Egypt and Pakistan. 60% of low-income countries, and 25% of emerging markets, are either in debt distress or at high risk of it.

Global debt continues to balloon and has reached \$300 trillion. 80% of new debt last year came from emerging markets.

But with inflation rising internationally, and central banks raising interest rates, the cost of servicing that debt is increasing. Even in more

developed capitalist countries this can precipitate crisis, as demonstrated by Truss and Kwarteng's brief disastrous time in office in Britain.

Poorer nations are in even deeper water. Typically, large proportions of investment come from capitalists based in the large imperialist nations. 90% of emerging market debt is in increasingly expensive US dollars. Under threat of economic turmoil, investors are most likely to roll back their foreign spending first.

Currency crisis

A loss of confidence in a nation's economy can see a currency's value plummet, reducing income from exports and increasing the price of imports. For workers and the poor this means more expensive goods or a lack of them, and less income from selling produce.

In 1997, the Asian financial crisis was triggered when Thailand run out of foreign currency reserves and its currency collapsed. The crisis spread across the region, with general strikes developing and governments overthrown (see 'When the capitalist bubble burst - 25 years since the Asian financial crisis' at socialistparty.org.uk).

25 years later, many of these nations' governments have built up larger foreign currency reserves than in the past, and typically have a more diverse set of creditors. The proportion of debt owed to private investors and China has increased.

Although not yet the size of the US economy, the Chinese economy has grown rapidly to roughly two thirds that of the US. China's investment overseas has grown too. The 'Belt and Road Initiative' is the name given to its investment portfolio based largely in developing economies.

An example is Sri Lanka's \$3.1-billion Hambantota Port, financed by Chinese loans, and a cricket stadium in the same city widely regarded as a white elephant. These investments form part of a long list of infrastructure projects failing commercially, and contributing to what the Financial Times describes as China's "first overseas debt crisis". Belt and Road investments had reached \$838 billion by the end of 2021. China itself has a growing mountain of sovereign debt, as well as increasing levels of corporate and personal debt.



Dealing with the debt crisis is another arena of growing inter-imperialist conflict, and the masses of the world's poorest nations will suffer

The rise of Chinese capitalism, and the move away from a 'unipolar' world, when US capitalism was by far the most dominant force, add complications to the process of agreeing debt restructures and bailouts. As the Economist put it: "The West does not want to give aid that flows into the pockets of Chinese creditors".

A \$2.9 billion IMF bailout package for Sri Lanka has been preliminarily agreed, subject to conditions, including agreements with the nation's creditors. Those negotiations will bring together representatives

of Chinese, Indian, Japanese and US capitalism - all rivals looking to advance their own economic interests in the region and on the island.

Dealing with the debt crisis is another arena of growing inter-imperialist conflict, and the masses of the world's poorest nations will suffer.

The inability to meet foreign debt payments, and the subsequent defaults, austerity-contingent renegotiations or bailouts, faces scores of nations. Inevitably, the economic devastation facing workers and the poor will bring popular uprisings.

Sri Lankan bailout conditions

In Sri Lanka, the mass movement grew into a force which swept aside a prime minister and president. But it has so far left the main capitalist institutions intact, and in the hands of the same capitalist class. The new president, who had previously served as prime minister numerous times, will lead a government negotiating a bailout. Its terms will inevitably demand more pain for the Sri Lankan masses.

No bailout deal will have terms which are acceptable to the workers and poor in Sri Lanka. That's why members of the United Socialist Party in Sri Lanka, the sister party of the Socialist Party, fight for the non-payment of the debt, as a key element of their socialist programme. A government of the workers and poor in Sri Lanka, refusing to pay the foreign debts racked up by the corrupt Rajapaksa regime, and refusing to pass the cost onto ordinary people, would win huge popular support nationally and internationally for its stand.

But it would face an onslaught from the capitalist class. The threat of domestic and foreign investment

fleeing the country would need to be met with capital controls. And a state monopoly of foreign trade to enable working-class democratic control of what goods are imported and exported. Nationalisation of the banks and major industry, under democratic workers' control, would mean investment could be planned to meet the needs of ordinary people, not to serve debt payments.

Internationalism

An appeal from the masses of Sri Lanka, to the masses internationally facing a similar fate, and to the working class in their creditors' nations - including China and India, themselves with domestic debt crises - to join in a struggle against their own capitalist classes, would undermine attempts to isolate the movement.

In Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, a socialist political programme is necessary to save the masses from ruin. What is missing in most cases is a mass working-class political party, and an organised force conscious of the need for the working class to take political and economic power into their own hands. That is what the Committee for a Workers' International is striving to build internationally.

WHAT WAY FORWARD FOR REVOLUTION IN SRI LANKA?

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Israel general election: 'Lefts' wiped out in polls, as far right surges

AMNON COHEN
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

Israel's general election, held on 1 November, and the fifth election in three years, saw the return of the corrupt, former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to power. He is still facing trial on four corruption charges. The far-right Religious Zionist Party, whose deputy leader, Itamar Ben-Gvir, calls for the expulsion of "disloyal" Arabs, as well as left-wing Jews, and is an admirer of Baruch Goldstein - a Jewish terrorist who massacred 29 Muslim Palestinians while they were praying - is now the third largest party in the Knesset, with 14 seats.

With 90% of the votes counted, the anti-occupation Meretz party is on track to narrowly miss the electoral threshold of 3.25% and to lose all its Knesset seats. The radical Palestinian party, Balad, which recently broke away from the Communist-led 'Joint List', also appears to have failed to clear the threshold, thereby losing its MK (member of parliament). And the once mighty Israeli Labour Party, which ruled Israel for three decades, barely scraped into the Knesset - winning only four seats - which is less than the Joint List.

This election represents a crushing defeat for the Israeli 'left', and shows their utter failure to offer a way out of the crisis in Israeli society.

Netanyahu returns to power just 16 months after he was ousted in the 2021 elections and replaced by the 'government of change'. That government, which had the backing of most of the Israeli capitalist class, was an unholy alliance, containing far-right settlers, the anti-occupation Meretz party, the Islamist United Arab List, the Israeli Labour Party, and Yair Lapid's centre party - disparate parties united only by their opposition to Netanyahu.

Despite a large financial surplus, the outgoing government ended the Covid stimulus payments which kept many families and small businesses afloat. The government also waged a bloody bombing campaign in Gaza, and accelerated the building of settlements and the expropriation of Palestinian land in the West Bank, as well as the eviction of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and their replacement by far-right settlers.

All this was done by a government propped up by Meretz and the Labour Party, which were prepared to act as a fifth wheel in this repressive government, in the name of keeping Netanyahu out. When Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was assassinated by the Israeli Defence Force, and her funeral was brutally attacked by Israeli police, the minister responsible was Labour MK, Omer Bar Lev.

The Meretz party had always railed against the evils of the occupation while in opposition, but once in government their six MKs, time and again, have voted to maintain the repressive laws which maintain the



PHOTO: HEINRICH-BÖLL-STIFTUNG

occupation regime. This has been done in the name of holding the coalition together and preventing the return of Netanyahu. In order to keep Netanyahu out, Meretz propped up a government that continued the racist and repressive policies which had been Netanyahu's hallmark.

After the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh, this contradiction became untenable, and Meretz's sole Arab MK, Ghaida Rinawie Zoabi, briefly resigned from the coalition, depriving it of its majority. The subsequent denunciation of Rinawie Zoabi by the Meretz leadership made it clear that, despite Meretz's egalitarian programme, Arab MKs role was to serve as a decoration, and were expected to do what they are told and vote for continued oppression of the Palestinians. Their decline to zero MKs in this election is the inevitable result of this record.

Netanyahu's Likud party is once again the largest in the Knesset, with 32 seats. But this represents only a quarter of the Knesset seats. Likud has maintained Trump-like right-populist support from the more downtrodden layers of the working class, who are aware that he is opposed by the majority of the capitalist establishment. But its share of the vote is still significantly less than in

the 1980s, when at one point Likud had 48 seats.

Many people are dismayed by the rapid ascent of the ultra-right Religious Zionist Party. Once a fringe party, it has doubled its vote. Its programme is one of racist civil war and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians, banning marriages between Jews and Muslims, and attacks on LGBTQ+ rights.

The gun-toting Itamar Ben Gvir is a follower of the neo-fascist Meir Kahane, and provides legal defence to Jewish terrorists who murder Palestinians. Ben Gvir was convicted for inciting racist hatred, and even the Israeli army, which is notorious for its racist oppression of Palestinians, refused to enlist him because of his extremist ideology. He has been prominent in the campaign to kick Palestinian families out of their homes in East Jerusalem and replace them by settler zealots.

His party won many votes from the mixed towns, where elements of inter-communal civil war erupted in May 2020, partially fermented by right-wing thugs from Ben Gvir's party. These mixed towns remain low-intensity war zones, and Ben Gvir capitalised on the fear among Jewish inhabitants of these neighbourhoods, offering the 'simple' solution

of expelling their Arab neighbours.

The rise of this party, the political embodiment of distilled reaction, shows the enormous crisis in Israeli society, and the desperation of large layers of the population who are disaffected with the failed establishment parties and desperate for a way out of the crisis. These are the horrific dangers caused by the vacuum when there is no workers' party offering a socialist solution to the crisis.

The Israeli press calculate that Netanyahu now has enough support in the Knesset to form a stable coalition with Ben Gvir. But forming such a coalition will be pouring petrol onto the already smouldering embers of the national conflict with the Palestinians, both inside and outside Israel proper, as well as with the surrounding Middle East. Therefore, Netanyahu is likely to prefer a 'national unity' government with Yair Lapid or Benny Ganz's centre parties, using the spectre of an ultra-right coalition with Ben Gvir to extract the maximum leverage.

After years of parliamentary stalemate, these elections give Netanyahu's allies a clear five-seat majority - arithmetically enough to form a stable coalition. But Netanyahu's Likud party would be a minority within such a coalition, and subject

to continuous blackmail by deranged right-wing fanatics. His five-seat coalition majority will not be enough to insulate him from the chronic instability of Israeli society, and his coalition will stagger from crisis to crisis and ultimately be torn to shreds.

Israeli capitalism is in crisis. Its parties have nothing to offer the working class except permanent war, insecurity and economic misery. These parties can only build support by stirring up the most reactionary ideas of racism, ultra-nationalism, homophobia, and hatred of migrant workers. There is no way out under capitalism, and all parties which cling to the capitalist system will stagger from crisis to crisis.

The only way out is the building of workers' parties, armed with a socialist programme, which can unite the working class on the basis of its common interests, and in that way end the nightmare of capitalism.

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Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November,
Queen Mary University, London

SHEILA CAFFEY

NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

This year has been the largest movement in the trade unions that I can remember. Where the Tories thought they could put austerity back on the agenda, the working class has fought back.

National ballots of any trade union willing to put forward a lead are smashing the anti-trade union laws, with well over 50% of members voting to take action to win the pay and conditions they desperately need and deserve!

In the last fortnight, more than eight out of ten University and

College Union (UCU) members in higher education have returned a ballot to strike - another 70,000 university staff joining the fightback.

And with a 20% pay cut in the last decade, and 25,000 leaving nursing in the last year, is it in any surprise that 300,000 nurses in the Royal College of Nursing have voted to take strike action?

Strike ballots

Ballot papers have gone out for over 800,000 education workers across three unions, including the head teachers' union. Civil servants in the PCS union have just finished a national ballot.

The Communication Workers Union and rail union RMT are in talks following massive national

action, and RMT and Aslef are rebalancing.

As a proud member of the National Education Union, I have returned my ballot paper to strike. I see the next step in the campaign as attending Socialism 2022. I look forward to mixing with hundreds of other socialists and working-class fighters. To hear platform speakers and discuss questions in sessions, such as 'Are we heading for a general strike?' and many others.

It is becoming increasingly clear that capitalism doesn't have any answers to the problems facing working-class people. Ministers and prime ministers are in a revolving door in parliament, offering sticking plasters of £60 a month for energy

bills, while crying crocodile tears that there's a £50 billion hole in public finances; a hole that they've created, awarding their cronies large public contracts!

New workers' party

The Starmer-led Labour Party has clearly shown it is no friend of the striking working class. Starmer banned shadow ministers from attending picket lines, and invited Royal Mail to Labour's national conference, at a time when Royal Mail bosses are tearing up terms and conditions for postal workers. They have clearly nailed their colours to the mast.

So, what is the answer? We need workers across unions coming together against the bosses and the

Tories. We need to fight for a new workers' party. And we need to fight for an alternative.

If we took profit out of the system, there'd be plenty of money for jobs, homes and services for all. If we took capitalist competition out of the system, then instead of a 'race to the bottom' decimating workers' pay and conditions, we could build well-paid, green industries. We need to fight for a socialist society, run by workers, in the interest of workers.

Where else will you be able to discuss the struggles, and leave energised to fight for a socialist future? If you've not yet checked the programme and bought your ticket, now is the time to do it, and attend the socialist event of the year!

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12



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